


Woodland Stewardship Online

1: Preparing a Woodland Stewardship Plan – Activity


How this helps you:

A woodland stewardship plan is the most basic and important tool that you can have to help manage your woodland. It will help you develop a vision for your property, identify opportunities, and provide specific recommendation that can help make your vision a reality.

Step 1: Work with a Forester

- **Step 1A:** Read the Introduction, What Is a Woodland Stewardship Plan, and Work with a Forester ( PDF, pages 1-2).
- **Step 1B:** Set up an appointment with a forester for a “woods walk” on your property. If you are uncertain how to contact a forester, go to your state department of natural resources as a starting point. The goal of this walk will be to learn about the history of your land, the types and abundance of trees species on your property, the capability of your land, the ecological processes currently at work, opportunities for management, and financial and technical assistance programs that can help you meet your goals.




Step 2: Identify Your Goals



- **Step 2A:** Read the section on Identifying Your Goals ( PDF, page 3).
- **Step 2B:** Identify and write down your woodland goals. Discuss with your family:
 - How did you come to own your woodland property?
 - What do you and your family do when you are there?
 - What outcomes do you seek from owning your woodland?
 - Write goals that are as specific as possible.
For example, a goal to provide the best possible wildlife habitat is too broad a goal to guide management. Your property may support dozens of species and you probably cannot provide ideal habitat for all of them, so which species or groups of species do you really care about?

More specific wildlife goals may be to:


- Protect habitat for threatened and endangered species known to occur on my land or nearby.
 - Provide the best possible habitat for deer and ruffed grouse.
- **Step 2C:** If you have multiple goals, prioritize those goals or think about where on your property each goal is most relevant.

Step 3. Inventory and Evaluate Your Property


- **Step 3A:** Read the section on Inventory and Evaluate Your Property ( PDF, pages 3-6).
- **Step 3B:** Work with a forester to inventory and evaluate your property. Chapter 2: Conducting a Woodland Inventory ( PDF, page 9) describes specific inventory techniques that a forester often will perform, but you need to prepare for the forester's visit.
- **Step 3C:** Get the deed for your woodland property and note its legal description. If you cannot find your deed, go to your County Recorder to request a copy.
- **Step 3D:** Accurately locate your property boundaries and mark them with a fence, paint mark on trees, rock piles, stakes, or other means. If the boundaries are not clearly identifiable, you may want to have your land surveyed.
- **Step 3E:** Clear brush from your property lines to make them more visible and avoid trespassing when you, your contractors, or your neighbors carry out forestry practices.
- **Step 3F:** Gather historical facts concerning previous land use or management activities that could have influenced the development of your woodland to help the forester understand the composition of your woodland and to predict the results of future management practices. Such activities might include: livestock grazing, agricultural cropping, timber harvesting, tree planting, fires, pest outbreaks, and other disturbances.
- **Step 3G:** While a forester should prepare a map of your property, you can save that person time and therefore, your cost, by collecting basic maps and information:
 - Aerial photographs are especially helpful as a foundation for the map (Figure 1-2,  PDF page 4). (See Links and References.) Lay clear acetate over the photo and use a marker to:
 - Mark property boundaries
 - Mark boundaries between major land uses and label those uses (e.g., cropland, pasture, woodland, residential)
 - Show roads and trails.
 - Mark the location of utility wires, pipelines, or other rights-of-way or easements.
 - Label buildings by use.
 - Label water resources.
 - Show the location of unique natural, historical, or archaeological resources.
 - If the property is large (several hundred acres) and hilly, get a topographic map. (See Links and References.)
 - Get a soil type map and associated soil interpretive information. (See Links and References.) Read all the information you can find regarding soil suitability for growing timber or building roads. Share the maps and interpretive information with your forester.

- **Step 3H:** Make a list of all the information you want included in your woodland stewardship plan and give this list to your forester. It may include these components and others:
 - Date of the plan.
 - Your name and contact information.
 - Legal description of the property.
 - Your management goals.
 - Description of the ecosystem in which your property is located and ecological issues of local concern that may influence your management.
 - Inventory of known or potential historic and cultural resources (e.g., cemeteries, burial mounds, foundations). Your forester may be able to obtain information from a statewide database of such resources.
 - Inventory of known or potential threatened, endangered or specialist interest species that may be present on your property. Your forester may be able to obtain information from a statewide database of such species.
 - History of your property's past management.
 - Map or aerial photograph of the property (See Figure 1-1,  PDF, page 4), approximately to scale, showing the following:
 - Property boundaries
 - Woodland boundaries
 - Land uses
 - Roads and trails
 - Utility wires, pipelines, or other rights-of-way
 - Buildings
 - Water resources, e.g., perennial and intermittent streams, lakes, and wetlands and seasonal ponds, seeps, and springs.
 - Location of wildlife habitats including mast, crops, game trails, snags, dens, nesting sites, thickets, etc. (See Chapter 11: Wildlife and Forest Management,  PDF, page 127).
 - Unique natural, historical, or archaeological resources
 - Description of each stand, e.g., timber quantity, quality, size, product potential, and other characteristics by species and site factors affecting a species' ability to grow, reproduce and compete, e.g., soil depth, texture and chemical properties, and position on the landscape (such as north or south slope aspect, ridge or valley, etc.)
 - Management practices recommended for each stand, including alternatives and their outcomes.
 - Timeline for accomplishing recommended practices.


Step 4. Develop Stand Objectives and Management Alternatives

- **Step 4A:** Read the section on Develop Stand Objectives and Management Alternatives ( PDF, pages 6-7).
- **Step 4B:** Choose management objectives for each woodland stand that relate to your overall property goals. While your property goals tell the forester what benefits you expect to derive from your woodland as a whole, your management objectives indicate what benefits you expect to derive from a particular stand. Knowing your stand objectives, the forester can better recommend appropriate management practices.


Step 5. Assess Management Constraints


- **Step 5A:** Read the section on Assess Management Constraints ( PDF, page 7).
- **Step 5B:** Make a list of the resources you are willing to devote to woodland management.
- **Step 5C:** Talk with your forester about how to overcome constraints, such as:
 - The amount of time you have available to do the work.
 - Your experience and expertise levels.
 - The availability of skilled contract labor.
 - The equipment available.
 - Your financial limitations.
 - The availability of government financial aid.
 - The potential economic return, including the tax implications (see Chapter 14 Financial Considerations).
 - The presence of cultural resources and threatened, endangered, or special interest species that are regulated by state or federal law.
 - The zoning laws or forest practice regulations in effect in your area.
 - The prevailing attitudes of neighbors or the general public.

Step 6. Choose Management Practices and List Them on a Schedule

- **Step 6A:** Read the section on Choose Management Practices and List Them on a Schedule ( PDF, page 7).
- **Step 6B:** Prepare an activity schedule, covering at least five to ten years, that lists management practices and the approximate dates when they should occur. These are the practices recommended by a forester that you choose to do.
- **Step 6C:** At least annually, plan to walk through your woodland and look for damage by pests, fire or wind, unauthorized harvest, damaged fences, and soil erosion.

Step 7. Keep Good Records

- **Step 7A:** Read the section on Keep Good Records ( PDF, page 7).
- **Step 7B:** Create a filing system to contain records that may be important when filing income tax returns, selling property, or settling an estate. Management records may include:
 - Management plan.
 - Timber inventory.
 - Management activities accomplished (what, when, where).
 - Sources of forestry assistance (name, address, telephone, e-mail addresses and web sites).

- Association memberships.
- Suppliers of materials and equipment.
- Contracts.
- Insurance policies.
- Forestry income and expenses. (See Chapter 14 Financial Considerations,
 PDF page 175)
- Deeds and easements.